

APPLICATION FOR MEMORIAL MARKER FOR WIXON CEMETERY

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Research writing and application submitted by Ruth J. Hary.
c. 1994

The Wixon School, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Wixon Cemetery were on adjoining pieces of ground. The Cemetery is all that remains of what was once a thriving center of a community. The marker is requested for the cemetery only. Information on the school and church is provided to put the cemetery in the proper context of the community.

In the days of Mexican control, during the Republic era and the early days of statehood, the Texas frontier called people wanting to blaze new trails and make a better life for themselves and their families. The war between the North and South slowed down the migration, and then immediately after the Civil War ended, families were again finding their way westward. The end of the Civil War left circumstances grim for most people of the old South.

A new beginning involved more than taking up from where things stood at the war's beginning. Reparations were harsh, farms had gone largely untended for four or five years, and much property had been intentionally destroyed or confiscated in the conduct of the war. Many men of work force age did not survive the war and slaves were emancipated. A total new beginning, perhaps in some better place, looked to many like the best course of action. The people who settled in the Wixon community were part of this group. In large numbers, they came from Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Tennessee.

These settlers established Wixon as a farming community and gave it a different spelling than the original name of Wickson Creek. Wickson Creek had been named for three Wickson brothers, Byrum, Dyron, and Eli, during the 1840's when Brazos County was founded by the Texas Congress. Wickson Creek is about 35 miles long and traverses a course through the Wixon Community.

Without a doubt, as soon as they found suitable land and established a home, they looked for a school for their children, a church in which to worship, and of course a burial place for their dead. They had to provide these places for themselves because this was undeveloped territory.

WIXON SCHOOL

The school in the Wixon Community appears to have been established first according to the deeds, followed by the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, and then the Wixon Cemetery. Harrison Crenshaw was involved in all the land transactions.

On 12 July 1873, Harrison Crenshaw deeded six acres of land to J. H. Mitchell, R. T. Short, J. D. Whitten, Z. P. Pearson, and H. Crenshaw, trustees of Wickson School House.¹ Harrison Crenshaw stipulates in this deed that he is selling the trustees the land for \$5.00 cash and further consideration of his desire to encourage a permanent school and promote the facilities of education in the said vicinity. This sums up his thoughts in regard to a school. The remark, "to encourage a permanent school and promote the facilities of education in the said vicinity" may indicate that they were operating some sort of school earlier than the one we know about.

On 18 December 1885, Harrison Crenshaw, for the sum of \$5.00, deeded one acre of land to the Brazos County Judge and his successors for Public School purposes. This property was adjacent to the Wixon Presbyterian Church and appears to straighten up the property line where the existing school building had been built.² The school was in existence from 1873 until about 1935. It was a one-room school with one teacher and met the educational requirements for the children from grades one through seven. Some years not all grades were needed, depending on the makeup of the students.³ Until some time in the 1920's, children had to carry their own drinking water to school since there was no water on site.⁴ In the early days,

¹ Deed Records, Brazos County, Texas, Vol. 0, p. 136

² Deed Records, Brazos County, Texas, Vol. 2, pp. 41-42.

³ Peters, Lola Rosier, personal interview by Ruth J. Hary and Janis J. Hunt, 22 Feb 1994. Mrs. Peters attended Wixon School as a child and later was one of the teachers.

⁴ Beard, Calvin, personal interview by Ruth J. Hary and Myrtle H. Martin 22 Jan 1994. Mr. Beard lived in the Wixon community as a child and attended Wixon School and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

school started in the fall after the crops were gathered and ended in the spring in time for spring planting.

The opportunity to continue their education after the seventh grade is not known but as early as 1919, students attended high school in Bryan. Students had to provide their own transportation to Bryan or live with relatives in Bryan in order to continue their education. It is obvious that these early pioneers believed in education because there is much evidence to indicate that many of them were able to continue their education on to the college level and above. If they couldn't attain college for themselves, they saw that their children had the opportunity.

Not much is known about Harrison Crenshaw himself, other than what has been stated above, except he was born 12 February 1830 and died 24 February 1905. He had several children, and we know of one son, Edwin Wayne Crenshaw, who was a local banker. Edwin had three sons. The youngest son, George Samuel Parker Crenshaw, was a teacher, an elementary grade school principal, a high school principal, and later Director of Personnel for the Bryan School System. George Samuel had a son, Harrison Manley Crenshaw II, who is a principal of a Bryan middle school at the present time.⁵

Harrison Crenshaw and several of his family are buried in the Wesson Cemetery which is a little over a mile north of the Wixon Cemetery on the same road, FM 2776. Harrison Crenshaw helped provide the land for a Methodist Church at Wesson Community and also for the Cemetery at Wesson. Mr. Crenshaw was a Methodist.

WIXON CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Harrison Crenshaw, by deed dated 28 December 1878,⁶ for the sum of \$1.00, sold three acres of land to J. C. Freeman, J. H. White, and J. W. Robinson, trustees of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. These three acres adjoined the school property at Wixon.

⁵Crenshaw, Nettie, personal interview by Ruth J. Hary and Myrtle H. Martin, 26 Jan 1994. Mrs. Crenshaw is the widow of George Samuel Parker Crenshaw.

⁶Deed Records Brazos County, Texas, Vol. 5, p. 413.

The church at this site was a Cumberland Presbyterian Church. In 1890, the "Report on Statistics of Churches in the United States"⁷ shows that Brazos County Texas had one Cumberland Presbyterian Church with seating capacity of 300, value of \$15,000 and 53 members. A "Report of Religious Bodies in the United States in 1906"⁸ shows that Brazos County had one "Cumberland Presbyterian Church" with 40 members and one "Presbyterian Church in the U. S" with 173 members. The latter church would have been the Presbyterian Church in Bryan, Texas. [Ed. Note: the latter is now known as First Presbyterian Church, Bryan, TX.]

From the statistics quoted above, we know that the Wixon Cumberland Presbyterian Church was a very active church in this community for many years. Early church records cannot be located to give us a listing of the pastors, but Rev. Jonathan H. Mitchell was one of their resident ministers living in the community. He was listed in their vicinity on the 1870 and 1880 U. S. Census of Brazos County. He certainly married their young people and buried their dead. He and his wife were among the contingent that came from Coosa County, Alabama in the early days. Rev. Mitchell was born 28 June 1811 and died 8 Nov 1891. His first wife was Martha Ann Robbins and after her death he married Margaret Freeman. He and his second wife are both buried in Wixon Cemetery.

The following sketch of Rev. J. H. Mitchell appeared in the Fort Worth Daily Gazette, 6 Apr 1886, p. 2, byline Bryan, Texas:

The San Jacinto Presbytery of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church is now in session at Wixon Church, seven miles north of Bryan. Their retiring moderator, Rev. J. H. Mitchell, now nearly seventy-five years old, was for a period of thirty-three years pastor of Ebenezer church in Coosa County, Ala. For seventeen years he has been pastor of Wixon church in this county. During the past winter while on a visit to Alabama, during the months of December and January, in revival

⁷"Report on Statistics of Churches in the United States at the Eleventh Census," 1890, p. 662, Department of the Interior Census Office, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.

⁸"Religious Bodies: 1906," p. 361, Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.

meetings he preached ninety-three sermons. He is as active and vigorous as most men of fifty-five or sixty.

This seems to suggest that the church was in existence before the land was deeded to the church.

A newspaper copy of the obituary for John H. White, Sr.,⁹ one of the founders of the church, indicates that the church building was still in existence 26 August 1935. The obituary states that funeral services were held this morning at 10:00 o'clock at Wixon, his old home church, with an immense crowd of friends and old time neighbors there to pay the last tribute of respect to a beloved and useful citizen. Mr. White lived to be 86 years old. The obituary goes on to state that funeral services were conducted at the church and also at the grave in the quiet churchyard cemetery. We know that the church was not active at this time but certainly there was still some sort of a building there in August 1935. The church was demolished at some later date, and there is no visible sign of it left today.

WIXON CEMETERY

The Wixon Cemetery is located in Brazos County, TX on the right or northeast side of FM 2776 about .3 of a mile from the intersection of Highway 21 East and FM 2776. From the Brazos County Courthouse, proceed 1 mile north on Highway 6 Business Route (Texas Avenue) to the intersection of Highway 21, right 5.9 miles to FM 2776.

By deed dated 28 May 1968, the Brazos County Judge and the Brazos County Independent School District Board deeded the school property to the Wixon Cemetery Association.¹⁰ A specific deed for the Wixon Cemetery has not been found. Access to the Cumberland Presbyterian Church minutes might reveal that the church authorized the use of some of their land for the Wixon Cemetery. Efforts to locate the church records have not been successful.

⁹ Bryan Daily Eagle, Bryan, Texas, 26 Aug 1935, obituary John H. White.

¹⁰ Deed Records Brazos County, Texas, Vol. 27, p. 116.

On 8 July 1978, the Wixon Cemetery Association was formally organized and By-Laws and Constitution adopted.¹¹ On 12 March 1984, the Wixon Cemetery Association was granted tax-exempt status by the IRS.

In the cemetery listing for Wixon Cemetery, there are 172 confirmed burials. The earliest burial, according to her tombstone, was Mrs. Nancy Summers, born 29 Nov 1830, died 29 Jun 1871. Nothing further was found in our research to identify her. We have discovered a large number of unlisted graves also.

Among the burials, we have found documentation for fifteen Confederate veterans:

W. C. Alverson 1822-1907	tombstone says Conf. Soldier; Newspaper obit says a valiant Conf soldier, Miss native. ¹²
Robert P. Batten 1846-1888	Tex CSA, 19 th Texas Cavalry (Burford's Reg't.) ¹³
Henry B. Bowden 1813-1874	Tex CSA, Co. I, 3 Texas Cavalry, (South Kansas Tex Reg't. Mtd. Vols.) ¹⁴
J. T. Closs 1831-1900	Tex CSA, Gould's Bat. ¹⁵
David D. Dawson, Sr. 1832-1907	Ala CSA, mem Camp J. B. Robertson, UCV ¹⁶
Wm. M. Foster, Jr. 1834-1881	Miss CSA, 2nd Lt, Co H, 31 Reg't, Miss Inf. ¹⁷
John Calvin Freeman 1841-1890	Ala CSA, Co C, 13th Ala Inf. ¹⁸

¹¹Stallings, H. G., personal interview by Ruth Hary, 23 Feb 1994. Mr. Stallings is past president of the Wixon Cemetery Association.

¹²Bryan Pilot, Bryan, Texas, 25 Apr 1907, obituary for W. C. Alverson.

¹³Index to Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Texas, Microfilm 219.2, Texas A & M University Library, College Station, Texas.

¹⁴Ibid. 13

¹⁵Texas Confederate Military Service Records, Microfilm 219.5, Texas A & M University Library, College Station, Texas.

¹⁶Daily Eagle, Bryan, Texas, 24 Oct 1907, obituary Capt. D. D. Dawson.

¹⁷Foster, William M., Jr., Tombstone information.

¹⁸Index to Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served from the State of Alabama, Microfilm, Houston Public Library, Clayton Branch, Houston, Texas.

James K. P. Hicks 1846-1882	Tex CSA, Co I, 33rd TX Cav. Duff's Partisan Rangers, 14th Bat Cav. ¹⁹
Jesse A. Hicks 1838-1882	Tex CSA, Co B Crump's Reg. Tx Cav., captured at La Fourche, La. ²⁰
Wm. R. Hicks 1840-1876	Ark CSA, Co. A, 15 (Johnson's) Ark Inf., captured Port Hudson, La. 9 Jul 1863. ²¹
Zachariah P. Pearson 1826-1874	Ala CSA, Co C, Hardie Batt'n, Cav. Reserves ²²
Elias C. Pearson 1830-1881	Ala CSA, Holloway's Co, Ala Cavalry. ²³
Robert W. Porter 1822-1883	Ala CSA, Capt Wm. Steed's Co, Talladega Co Reserves. ²⁴
Samuel L. Scott 1830-1894	Tex CSA, Co for Beat #3, Grimes Co, 17th Brigade, TST. ²⁵
J. Walter White 1828- 1876	Tex CSA, Militia for Beat #4, Grimes Co., 17th Brig., T M. ²⁶

Many of these early families suffered from casualties of the war. The J. Calvin Freeman family recalls that there were five Freeman brothers who served and only Calvin came back. He had a shattered arm. ²⁷ The family of William R. Hicks and Jesse A. Hicks report that the Hicks brothers were imprisoned by the Union troops. None of the three Hicks brothers lived to be very old, but it is not known if they suffered from war injuries. ²⁸

Another pioneer buried in this cemetery Capt. D. D. Dawson, CSA veteran, served as a Sheriff in Brazos County from 28 June 1880 to 15 Nov

¹⁹ Ibid. 13

²⁰ Veterans Records from National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

²¹ Ibid. 20

²² Ibid. 20

²³ Ibid. 18

²⁴ Ibid. 18

²⁵ Ibid. 15

²⁶ Ibid. 15

²⁷ Ibid. 4

²⁸ Hicks family history information supplied by descendants Ruth J. Hary, Janis J. Hunt, and Myrtle H. Martin.

1880 and from 7 December 1882 through 13 November 1890. He also served as a Brazos County Commissioner in 1881.²⁹

The Wixon Cemetery is very well maintained. It has a hurricane fence surrounding the property which was installed many years ago. Mrs. Inda Freeman Beard (wife of Ernest J. Beard) was one of the organizers for the fund-raising to obtain the money for the fence.³⁰ H. G. Stallings³¹ was instrumental in getting the property under oil lease and the Wixon Cemetery Association established a trust fund in 1985 at one of the local banks for deposit of the oil revenues. The trust fund has been very beneficial to the Association for maintenance of the Cemetery and to make necessary improvements such as an ornamental sign and new gate opening for the Cemetery. These funds have also been used to make improvements to the internal roads.

In some of the research on our own ancestors who remained in the southern home states, we have heard the remark more than once that they always heard that the people who went to Texas were rich. We found it very amusing because there weren't any people anywhere who worked any harder to eke out an existence for their families than our ancestors who came to Texas. It is ironic that the oil revenues from the Wixon Cemetery might be construed to make these people rich long after their death. It has provided the funds with which to make their Cemetery classified as being "very well maintained."

The Wixon School Building and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church Building are no longer in existence although they occupied the same site as the Cemetery. It seems only fitting that we honor these early ancestors with a Memorial Marker for the Wixon Cemetery. Without a doubt, they made many contributions to the development of this area.

²⁹ Brundridge, Glenna Fourman: "Brazos County History, Rich Past - Bright Future," p. 268, Family History Foundation, Bryan, Texas, 1986.

³⁰ Ibid. 4

³¹ Ibid. 11

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